

# US Exceptionalism and the Wars in Syria and Ukraine

By [Rick Sterling](#)

Global Research, March 03, 2023

Region: [USA](#)

Theme: [Intelligence](#)

In-depth Report: [SYRIA, UKRAINE REPORT](#)

All Global Research articles can be read in 51 languages by activating the Translate Website button below the author's name (desktop version)

To receive Global Research's Daily Newsletter (selected articles), [click here](#).

Follow us on [Instagram](#) and [Twitter](#) and subscribe to our [Telegram Channel](#). Feel free to repost and share widely Global Research articles.

\*\*\*

## Introduction

*Syria has been at war since 2011. The conflict is in a stalemate. US troops control nearly a third of the country. The US finances the operation and a secessionist army with [oil](#) and wheat they take from the area. It funds them and deprives the Syrian government from their own resources. In the northern province of Idlib, the Syrian version of Al Qaeda is in control, receiving the majority of aid from Europe while the 90% of Syrians who live in government controlled areas go hungry and have electricity only three hours per day.*

Meanwhile in Ukraine, the bloodshed continues as Russian troops battle Ukrainian soldiers while the US and NATO pour in weapons. Russian troops have taken control of much of the eastern region, the Donbass.

How did we get here and what is driving the process?

## The Rise of the US Exceptionalism

After the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1990, influential neoconservatives said it was time for US interests and priorities to be dominant. There was only one superpower. This was to be a New American Century with no challengers. This perspective went from being a fringe element to increasingly influential. Over the course of the 1990's, it took hold and became US foreign policy. They said it explicitly: The US should not permit any country to challenge US supremacy and dominance.

With the Soviet Union gone and Russia in disarray, there was no counter-force in international organizations or the United Nations. The US manipulated existing agencies and created new institutions to its advantage. History and international agreements were rewritten. For example, with US and Israeli pressure, the UN resolution affirming that Zionism is a form of racism was [overturned](#).

US foreign policy became increasingly aggressive. Sanctions on Iraq, aimed to drive the country into total submission, led to the deaths of hundreds of thousands. Children were especially vulnerable to sickness from contaminated water. Chlorine for purification was prohibited while the US hailed itself a leader in gender equality with the first female Secretary of State, Madeline Albright.

Recalcitrant countries were subject to attack. The multi-ethnic country of Yugoslavia was a prime target. Divisions were promoted while the CIA funded an extremist separatist army. NATO went on the attack, bombing Serbia without authorization from the UN Security Council. The plan was clear: divide and conquer.

Simultaneously, the creation of the European Union in 1993 made it harder for individual countries to act in their own best interests and easier for the US to dominate the whole.

The military alliance binding them together is NATO - the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. Although this is a military alliance, there is no doubt which country is paramount. The US spends more than all others combined.

The September 11 attacks in 2001 were a watershed moment. The attacks provided a "Pearl Harbor" moment and justification for increased US aggression abroad. The official explanation of who carried out the attacks and why has been seriously [challenged](#). Whoever perpetrated the attacks, neoconservatives used 9-11 to push their agenda. The US commenced their attack and occupation of Afghanistan.

The next major violation of international law was the invasion of Iraq in 2003. Iraq was devastated, extremism and sectarianism exploded. Today, US troops remain there despite the Iraqi parliament and government requesting they leave.

Iraq did not have weapons of mass destruction as claimed by US "intelligence". Instead, a form of chemical weapons was created in Iraq by the US military. Dust from depleted uranium bullets and missiles vaporized and mixed with the environment. Iraq has experienced a huge increase in [birth defects and cancer](#).

## Russia Restabilizes

While this was happening, Russia was starting to restabilize under the Putin administration. After a decade of chaos, corruption and the collapse of the communist safety net, Russia was getting back on its feet in the early 2000s. The standard of living and life expectancy started to increase. Western advisors were no longer in charge. Oligarchs were no longer able to rob at will.

Even though the Warsaw Pact has ceased to exist, NATO refused to disband. On the contrary, despite promises to Russian leaders, NATO expanded in 1999, 2004 and 2009.

When NATO invited Georgia and Ukraine to join NATO in 2008, Russia loudly said NO. They said that would cross a red line for them. NATO was clearly an OFFENSIVE alliance and to permit it on the Ukraine border less than 500 miles from Moscow would jeopardize Russian security. Russia kept asking that security for ALL be considered.

## War in Libya and Syria

Unrest in Libya erupted in early 2011. Western media started propagating stories of pending

massacres and the UN Security Council, with China and Russia abstaining, [authorized](#) a “no fly zone” and “necessary measures to protect civilians”. This became the pretext for the US plus NATO and other allies to attack Libyan government forces. They overthrew the Libyan government and unleashed a civil war that continues to today. Later evidence revealed the sensational claims of rape and pending massacre were [falsehoods](#), just like in the past.



U.S. military vehicle runs past the Tal Tamr area in the countryside of Hasakah province, northeastern Syria, Nov. 14, 2019. | Photo: Str/Xinhua

At the same time, the West and allies Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Turkey were funding, training and supporting extremists and foreigners travelling to Syria. After the overthrow of the Libyan government, the CIA took control of Libyan military arsenals and started sending weapons to jihadists in Syria.

Extremists were trained in [camps in Turkey](#) on the Syrian border. Weapons were flown into Incirlik US Air Base in southern Turkey. Thus started the US war on Syria which continues to today.

In the Fall of 2013, a sarin gas attack killed hundreds of civilians in outer Damascus. Neocons were itching to attack Syria as they had attacked Libya and Iraq. President Obama claimed, “We know the Assad regime was responsible.” He also said “I believe we should act. That’s what makes America different. That’s what makes us exceptional.”

The US attack was deterred after Russia persuaded Syria to give up all their chemical weapons – which had been developed as a deterrent against Israel’s nuclear weapons. Russian Putin praised the agreement but cautioned, “It is extremely dangerous to encourage people to see themselves as exceptional, whatever the motivation.”

Later, Seymour Hersh [revealed](#) that the chemical attacks were not carried out by the Syrian government as claimed by Obama. Rather, they had been perpetrated by Syrian extremists with Turkish support. The purpose was to provide a pretext for US and NATO direct attacks on Syria.

## War in Ukraine

Meanwhile, 1200 miles north of Damascus, protests in the Maidan main square of Kyiv Ukraine were growing in intensity. There was a combination of peaceful protesters and a small but violent faction of ultra nationalist extremists. Western [billionaires](#) and US [agencies](#) were instrumental in promoting pro-western organizations and the Ukraine protests. US politicians and officials such as Victoria Nuland and John McCain showed up to offer symbolic and tangible support.



Featured image is from The Unz Review

On Feb 7, 2014 Victoria Nuland and the US Ambassador [planned](#) who would take leadership after the pending Ukraine coup. Nuland summed it up: “Yats is the guy” (Arseny Yatsenyuk). Referring to a compromise agreement preferred by European leaders, Nuland said, “Fuck the EU.” From the conversation, we also know that Jake Sullivan (current National Security Advisor) and then Vice President Biden were involved. US neoconservatives were not satisfied with a mixed Ukraine. They wanted an anti Russia Ukraine.

With the Winter Olympics in Sochi Russia drawing toward a close, someone decided to expedite the coup. Timing is important. On Feb 20 snipers killed over 50 protesters and police to ignite the events. Ukrainian-Canadian Professor Ivan Katchanovoski of the University of Ottawa has rigorously [researched](#) the events and shows that the shootings were by snipers located in opposition controlled buildings.

On the first day of the coup government, on 27 February, they removed Russian as an official language despite 30% of the population having it as a first language. It would be comparable to a coup in Ottawa Canada with the coup government removing French as an official language of Canada. The new leader was the same Arseny Yatsenyuk as planned by Nuland weeks earlier.

Opponents of the coup government were attacked with 42 killed in Odessa. In Crimea, they quickly organized a referendum on whether to secede from Ukraine. With 83% turnout, 97% of the population said they wanted to join the Russian Federation. In eastern Ukraine north of Crimea, called the Donbas, there was also a majority of the population deeply opposed to the coup and coup government. They confronted the authorities and many military units defected to join the secessionists. The regions were cut off by the Kiev government, with pensioners no longer receiving retirement checks and government services stopped. The Ukrainian Army attacked and thousands died. The regions were excluded from national elections. Eventually they organized themselves as the Donetsk and Lugansk Peoples

Republics. Thus the war in Ukraine did not begin one year ago; it began nine years ago, in February 2014.

In late 2014 and again in 2015, peace agreements to resolve the civil war in Ukraine were signed in Minsk. France and Germany were to help insure the implementation. Russia supported this as a way to resolve the conflict. The UN Security Council passed a [resolution](#) endorsing the agreement.

Instead of implementing this, Kiev ignored their promises while the US and NATO began arming and training the Ukraine Army. In effect, Ukraine became an unofficial member. The arming and NATO-ization continued and escalated. First it was only “defensive” weapons. Then, under Trump, they began supplying “offensive” weapons.

NATO plans to destabilize and weaken Russia were explicit. The Pentagon thinktank, the RAND Corporation, published reports discussing strategic options to weaken and [destabilize Russia](#). The longer term goal: to break it up as plotted by Brzezinski in his US foreign policy bible [The Grand Chessboard](#).

It has recently been revealed by the former Ukrainian, French and German leaders that the 2015 MINSK peace agreement was a ruse. By their own statements and admissions, it was never a genuine effort to peacefully resolve the civil war in eastern Ukraine. The goal was to stall for time while NATO trained and equipped the Ukrainian Army, to solidify the anti Russian attitude and crush those not in agreement.

## NeoCons do not want peace in Ukraine

The neocons driving Washington’s foreign policy do not want to end the Ukraine war; they want to prolong it. They dream of repeating what happened in the 1980’s when Russian intervention in Afghanistan led to the weakening and ultimate breakup of the Soviet Union. The former boss of Jake Sullivan, Hillary Clinton, [said](#) explicitly in March “That [Afghanistan] is the model that people are now looking toward.”

The immorality of US policy is breathtaking. Afghanistan went through hell beginning in 1979 as the US and Saudi Arabia supported and armed religious fanatics to destabilize Afghanistan and create trouble for the Soviet Union. Afghanistan has endured over four decades of conflict and extremism and is still suffering.

Today, US neocons running foreign policy are sacrificing Ukraine with the same goal of undermining Russia. They could not live with a neutral Ukraine and have promoted and allied with ultra-nationalist and neo-Nazi Ukrainian elements. [Previously](#) Washington did not want anything to do with the neo-Nazis but this has changed.

## NeoCons and Syria

The US has also allied with extremists in Syria. In late 2014 and early 2015, ISIS and Nusra (the Syrian Al Qaeda) made major assaults. Syrian and foreign extremists poured across the Turkish border. There were dozens of Canadians, hundreds of Brits, thousands of Europeans and North Africans. The Canadian and British secret services were well aware of the plans of their citizens who were being recruited by Al Qaeda and ISIS. They did nothing because, as Jake Sullivan [said](#), “AQ [Al Qaeda] is on our side in Syria.”

With weapons and training from western military and intelligence forces, the extremists

were able to capture a large area of northern Syria and the outskirts of Damascus.

In September 2015 Russia came to the assistance of the Damascus government. They provided airplanes and pilots to attack the advancing extremists. Uninvited, the US began also overflying Syria and then establishing US bases in the east and south. They rarely attacked ISIS but attacked Syrian troops at critical times. Then they began cultivating Kurdish secessionist elements. They [rebranded](#) them as the “Syrian Democratic Forces”. They are still there today – stealing the Syrian nation’s wealth in oil and wheat. The US has imposed draconian sanctions on the majority of the country. The dirty war on Syria continues.

Neoconservative belief in US supremacy and impunity are exemplified by former Deputy Director of the CIA, Michael Morell. In an 2016 interview, he was outraged that Russia supported the Syrian government resisting extremist attacks. In a [2016 interview](#), Morell publicly suggested “covertly” killing Russians who are on the ground in Syria. “They got to pay a price for what they’re doing. Just like we made the Russians pay a price in Afghanistan .... We have to make them want to go home.”

## Russian Intervention in Ukraine

One year ago, Russia troops went into Ukraine with the stated goal of de-nazifying and demilitarizing the country. Many Ukrainian civilians have fled the fighting with more that [3 million going to Russia](#), by far the most of any country.

Did Russia have a choice? They could have continued waiting, hoping for a change in attitude by the US and NATO. They tried. In December 2021 Russia proposed peace treaties with the US and NATO. Instead of negotiating, the US and NATO dismissed the proposals out of hand.

The [US-Ukraine Strategic Partnership](#), signed in November 2021, made it clear there was no intention to respect the will of the overwhelming majority of people in Crimea or to implement the Minsk Agreement to resolve the eastern Ukraine conflict peacefully. On the contrary, Ukraine with US support was building its forces to attack the Donbass and perhaps Crimea.

After 30 years of NATO provocations and escalating threats, Russia acted. While this has been condemned in the West, there is widespread understanding and support for their position in the Global South. A [recent poll](#) indicates that a big majority continue to feel positively about Russia.

What happens in Ukraine will have a profound impact on the globe. The “New American Century” dreamed by US hawks has been challenged.

It is high time to end US delusions of superiority and exceptionalism. The USA should become a normal nation.

We need a multipolar world with respect for the UN Charter and international law.

Let the people in Crimea and the Donbass choose their destinies. Let the war end and Ukrainians recover and prosper in an independent country which is neither a tool of the US or Russia. Let Syria rebuild and recover without the cruel US sanctions.

Let the US turn from fomenting conflicts, undermining and attacking other countries to reforming and improving itself.

\*

Note to readers: Please click the share buttons above. Follow us on Instagram and Twitter and subscribe to our Telegram Channel. Feel free to repost and share widely Global Research articles.

*Rick Sterling is an independent journalist based in the San Francisco Bay Area. He can be contacted at [rsterling1@protonmail.com](mailto:rsterling1@protonmail.com). He is a regular contributor to Global Research.*

*Featured image is from Women's International League for Peace and Freedom*

The original source of this article is Global Research  
Copyright © [Rick Sterling](#), Global Research, 2023

---

[Comment on Global Research Articles on our Facebook page](#)

[Become a Member of Global Research](#)

Articles by: [Rick Sterling](#)

**Disclaimer:** The contents of this article are of sole responsibility of the author(s). The Centre for Research on Globalization will not be responsible for any inaccurate or incorrect statement in this article. The Centre of Research on Globalization grants permission to cross-post Global Research articles on community internet sites as long as the source and copyright are acknowledged together with a hyperlink to the original Global Research article. For publication of Global Research articles in print or other forms including commercial internet sites, contact: [publications@globalresearch.ca](mailto:publications@globalresearch.ca)  
[www.globalresearch.ca](http://www.globalresearch.ca) contains copyrighted material the use of which has not always been specifically authorized by the copyright owner. We are making such material available to our readers under the provisions of "fair use" in an effort to advance a better understanding of political, economic and social issues. The material on this site is distributed without profit to those who have expressed a prior interest in receiving it for research and educational purposes. If you wish to use copyrighted material for purposes other than "fair use" you must request permission from the copyright owner.

For media inquiries: [publications@globalresearch.ca](mailto:publications@globalresearch.ca)